

MISSION

Transparency, accessibility, accountability- three basic concepts that the public has come to expect, and indeed, should demand, of the various branches of government that shape our society. Recent events have highlighted the need to review and reform, to the extent possible, the manner in which the judicial branch of government conducts its business.

Article First, Section 10 of the state constitution states "All courts shall be open." Thus, there are constitutional, common law and statutory guarantees of public access to the records and proceedings of our courts, except in limited circumstances.

Although change cannot be forced upon the judicial branch without a constitutional amendment, we owe to our citizens, and the judicial branch owes to its members, a thorough assessment of its policies and procedures as they relate to access to information.

The time has come for new accessibility in Connecticut's judicial branch of government. I therefore establish the Governor's Commission on Judicial Reform. The Commission's mission shall be to survey judicial rules, policy and procedures regarding access to court operations and to make recommendations on greater transparency. In reaching its recommendations, the Commission shall consider the following:

- Whether existing general statutes and rules of the judicial branch adequately protect the public's presumptive right to access to court documents relating to the judicial branch's adjudicatory function.
- Whether the Connecticut general statutes and the judicial branch's practices and procedures with regard to the closing of courtrooms, and the sealing of court files and individual rulings and pleadings, sufficiently protect the public's presumptive right to observe and monitor court proceedings.
- Whether, having due respect for the independence of the judiciary as a co-equal branch of government, Connecticut's freedom of information laws should be amended to permit greater public access to records, pleadings, and docket information.
- Whether, having due respect for the independence of the judiciary as a co-equal branch of government, Connecticut general statutes sec. 1-200(1)(a) should be amended to define the term "administrative functions" as it relates to the judicial branch.
- Whether existing, publicly-available electronic databases can be expanded to allow more ready access to judicial branch records.
- Whether laws of other states provide better legitimate access to court records and documents.